

Memories of Topaz camp still vivid after 45 years

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By ALVIN R. BARLOW

Driving down Salina Canyon in the early spring of 1942 I was hailed down by Mr. Earl Anderson, owner and operator of the Willow Spring Coal Mine.

He was a business associate and we both had previously contracted with the government to supply coal to Civilian Conservation Corps Camps in Utah. He had just received an urgent phone call from the United States Government asking if he could immediately deliver a truckload of coal to Topaz, Utah.

Topaz was a relocation camp for Japanese Americans from the west coast. Japanese babies were being born in an unheated hospital at Topaz. It was an emergency. Would I take my load of coal there?

An executive order, Number 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and declared the Japanese Americans our suspect enemy. A stroke of the pen virtually made them prisoners of war. Several camps were built for this purpose and Topaz was one of them. At one time it was the fifth largest city in Utah.

I arrived at the camp near Delta, Utah in the early evening with my truckload of coal. It was an appalling sight and my first introduction that World War II was real. Housed in hastily constructed wooden buildings covered with tar paper were some 8,000 Japanese Americans removed from the west coast of the United States. Each family — parents and children — was allocated a small space with potbelled stoves to keep them warm. But there was as yet no coal.

After being cleared by security

I was directed to unload half of my coal at the hospital and the remainder at a point near the center of camp. After I did so, the Japanese men and women came hurrying from all directions with five gallon used oil buckets and began to scramble for the coal. A shocked, worried look was on their faces as well as a sense of hopelessness and despair.

The Japanese incarcerated at Topaz seemed to be stunned by the swiftness with which their way of life as changed. Many of

Guest commentary

them lost everything they had worked for all their lives. This included comfortable homes, cars, farms and businesses. Most all possessions, except for a few personal belongings, were sold within a few days for whatever a crash market would bring. Many of them were wealthy farmers or businessmen well respected in their various communities.

Now such once-proud people were submissively begging from me, their supposed enemy, for a few lumps of coal to warm their bewildered children. I left the camp disheartened with what I had observed. Little did I realize I soon would join the military and be trained to recognize a Japanese soldier by certain physical features and the color of his skin. Then I was supposed to destroy him.

Willow Spring Mine did not get

the coal contract for Topaz. This one emergency load of coal, the first to be delivered there, was my last contact with Topaz until after the war. Still, the camp and the people were often on my mind.

After the war, I had veteran's priority and successfully bid on and purchased one of the buildings at Topaz. It was moved to my place of business in Sanpete County to be used as a warehouse.

I remember the day I returned to Topaz after the war to remove the building. Topaz then seemed such a desolate, dusty, lonely place. Maybe it had seemed that way before to others. Gone now were the guard towers and the barbed-wire fences. Most of the tar-papered buildings had been removed. The people, too, were gone. But I would vividly remem-

ber how they had begged lumps of coal from me several years earlier. I wondered how they had managed during those years of internment.

A few years ago Ted Nagata was quoted in a newspaper article. He was six years old when he went to Topaz. On February 19, 1983, he stated "Topaz was a tragedy that never should have happened." I agreed with Nagata. It was not a proud moment in American History.

The article aroused once again my memories of Topaz. Since then I have read many other articles about this American Tragedy. It was a challenge to Democracy and the Constitution. It also seems to be an affront to the very freedoms we, and so many of them, eventually fought to preserve. Today, some 40 years after the war, financial

compensation and related moral issues are still being tested in the highest legal courts.

In the past I have sometimes been accused of being conservative. Others have thought me to be too much middle-of-the road on other issues. But on Topaz I have mixed feelings. As a coal trucker, I was among the first to see these Japanese as they were relocated. As a citizen I can sympathize with my governments' concern and the position they took at the time. War hysteria and the threat to our national security undoubtedly determined much of the policy. In a similar way as a soldier, I was taught an extreme attitude to protect my life and my country.

I have tried to look at both sides of the issue concerning Topaz. Extremists on both sides have used much stronger lan-

guage than I would use. Some say articles such as this one open old wounds. The scar is there, but maybe the issue needs to be examined once again. We should try to look at it with greater understanding.

The subject has been addressed many times in the media, papers, television, etc. Hopefully the issues of morals and money can soon be decided. I would then hope that the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, especially those that relate to race, color or creed, never need to be tested again.

(Alvin R. Barlow is a Provo resident.)

A television documentary dealing with Topaz will be broadcast this evening, 6-8 o'clock on Channel 7.)



The Japanese internment camp at Topaz, Utah.

And that might not be such a bad thing after all.

Ruff said his first business failed, but it was probably the best thing that ever happened to him.

"I never want it to happen again, but I learned more from that failure than I have in all my successes."

Ruff made his comments Tuesday at

One key to starting a business is to not do it half-heartedly, Ruff said.

"Every successful business goes through a time when it appears it can't make it. People that have an easy way out will take it."

Next, successful business owners should either have supportive spouses or none at all. Ruff said in his business dealings, he will never start a business with someone who has a troubled marriage because

those considering going into business should find a partner to help them.

"Find someone who is good at what you are not," he said.

The most important thing people need to remember is to believe in themselves.

"Believe in yourself when no one else does. You have to believe in the American Dream. It's a cliché, but it's still true."

the Ruff organization. The suit alleges misappropriation of funds contributed to several Ruff groups. Charges include mail and wire fraud, theft, embezzlement, slander and racketeering.

"We are moving to dismiss it," Ruff said at a luncheon Tuesday at Utah Valley Community College.

Plaintiffs themselves filed the suit after failing to secure an outside attorney. They seek \$122,960,000 in actual

who have personal grievances against Neal Blair, one of Ruff's business associates and Free the Eagle, which raises money for various conservative causes.

"We'll have our day in court," Ruff said. "This will blow over. There is no substance to it. None. Zero. These are outright, despicable lies."

The suit asks the court to declare Ruff's non-profit organizations unlawful and requests a jury trial.

Plan for trailway along Provo River draws fire in Orem

By TOM WALTON
Herald Staff Writer

An Orem resident promised a "battle" if the government exercised eminent domain to make a 500-foot strip of his property part of the Provo River Trailway.

"If you use eminent domain, we (his family) will be there and there will be a battle," Hal Williams, 1112 E. 800 S., said.

Trailway Committee representatives and local residents appeared before the Orem City Council Tuesday during its work session to discuss the controversial plan. Committee officials petitioned the council for its support of the project and asked that the city require 100-foot setbacks for homes along the river.

However, the spectre of eminent domain haunted the proceedings. "I hope we can avoid legal action, but it may be the only way," said Rep. LeRay McAllister, R-Orem.

The committee feels a sense of

While the state would have to initiate any legal proceedings, the committee wanted the council's support. "In order for the project to have validity, it must have support from the local government entity," said one committee representative.

Legal precedent favors the government, but Williams believes he has a moral right to his property. "Our family wants that American Dream of building our home where we want to without government interference on any level," he said.

Williams claimed any legal action to secure his property for the trail would result of higher taxes of other residents because the government would be taking "prime property off the tax rolls."

Several residents of the River Breeze Haven Subdivision voiced opposition to the trail, citing concerns for the health and safety of their children and alleging they were not aware of any easements

Utah lowest in per pupil spending in nation

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah spends the least in its elementary and secondary schools per student of any state in the nation, has the country's highest percentage of residents under 18, and is 47th in personal income per capita, says the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

In its recently released Statistical Abstract of the United States, the bureau noted that Utah spent an average of \$2,297 per student compared to a \$3,723 national average.

The study shows that 37.3 percent of the state's 1.645 million population is under 18, much higher

than the 26.4 percent nationally. Correspondingly, Utah ranked 49th in the percentage of residents 65 or over as of 1985, 7.9 percent compared to 12 percent nationally.

Personal income per capita as of 1985 was \$10,493. The national average was \$13,867.

The bureau also found that Utah recorded 23.6 births per 1,000 population in 1984 second in the nation, which had a 15.5 average.

The average Utah lifespan of 75.76 years 1979-81 was nearly two years higher than the national average of 73.88, and fourth in the country, the bureau said.

The state's 1.645 million population in 1985 ranked 35th in the U.S., but the rate of growth in Utah 1980-85, 12.6 percent, was sixth.

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